



WHAT COULD THIS
BOY BE THINKING?

INSIDE:
SPECIAL DAILY
**PHOTO
FLIP-BOOK**

THE MCGILL DAILY

VOLUME 34 • NUMBER 25

Dragging on since 1961

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1994

A VERY SPECIAL LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND GAY ISSUE

Le retour à l'original.**Pour hommes seulement.****Tous les jeudis.****Dès le 10 nov.****Spécial bière et schnapps.****No cover****1450 Ste-Catherine Est.****MYTHS ABOUT BISEXUALITY**

by sharon forman-sumpter

Myth: Bisexuals are denying their lesbianism or gayness.

Truth: Bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation which incorporates gayness. Most bisexuals consider themselves part of the generic term "gay". Many are quite active in the gay community, both socially

and politically. Some of us use terms such as "bisexual lesbian" to increase our visibility on both issues.

Myth: Bisexuals are in "transition."

Truth: Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual iden-

tity. For many others, bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. Indeed, we are finding that homosexuality may be a transitional phase in the coming-out process for bisexual people.

Myth: Bisexuals spread AIDS to the lesbian and heterosexual communities.

Truth: This myth legitimizes discrimination against bisexuals. The label "bisexual" simply refers to sexual orientation. It says nothing about sexual behavior. AIDS occurs in people of all sexual orientations. AIDS is contracted through unsafe sexual practices, shared needles, and contaminated blood transfusions. Sexual orientation does not "cause" AIDS.

Myth: Bisexuals can hide in the heterosexual community when the going gets tough.

Truth: To "pass" for straight and deny your bisexuality is just as painful and damaging for a bisexual as it is for a gay. Bisexuals are not heterosexual and we do not identify as heterosexual.

— Excerpted from the bisexual anthology *Bi Any Other Name*, edited by Lorraine Hutchins and Lani Ka'ahumanu. See interview by Lorraine Hutchins see pages 8-9.

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WHY A SPECIAL LBG ISSUE?

This issue was difficult to put together. Those of us involved in selecting which contributions to publish in the limited space available found ourselves in debate as to what was essential for the paper.

The debates centred around the questions of "community", language, and who the paper should be for.

Some of us wanted to focus our attention on McGill students only. It was argued that this issue should act as a forum for the voices of lesbian, bisexual, and gay students at McGill. Others of us felt that an "LBG Special Issue" should try to cover issues relevant to all members of the community — not just those who choose to study, or can afford to be, at McGill.

In the end, we decided that the paper should try to do both. So inside you'll find poetry and erotica, "experience stories", and news pieces. The works tell what these students feel it means to be bisexual, lesbian or gay, and they outline what it means to be Queer outside of the university setting.

Queer. We had a lot of discussion about whether or not to use the word. Those in favour of it explained that it should be used because it is gender-neutral, and because it is a term which includes also those who are Queer—positive, if not lesbian, gay, or bisexual themselves. The flip side pointed out that "queer" is a word that has negative connotations, and just should not be reclaimed.

Our discussions, although often heated (and maybe even a little tense...) were nonetheless productive. They reminded us that we, as bisexual and gay women and men, are not a homogenous community. We differ in our politics, our sexual fantasies, and our relationships with heterosexuals. But reading through this special issue, it's impossible not to see that we have a lot in common too. True, we're united by our struggle against heterosexism and homophobia. But equally important is the fact that we can be united in our celebration of Queer cultures.

Sans plus de cérémonie, permettez-nous de vous présenter une édition très spéciale du *McGill Daily*.
Cherie Payne

APOLOGY TO CONTRIBUTORS

We had grand ideas at the beginning of this project that we would run a 24 page issue with tons of everything. Unfortunately we only got 2 pages of ads. That meant that we had to cut 8 pages of material. A variety of contributions were cut from the final edition, including some submitted to the LBG office. We apologize for not being able to publish everyone's contributions. Look forward to seeing more LBG content in future issues of the paper.

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THE MCGILL DAILY

COMING OUT /STAYING IN

Coming out in CÉGEP

by michael
westminster

It's odd that one could be so eager to write an article for this issue, then sit down and have no idea what to write. I mean, it's not as if I have been out of the closet for more than two months. It's not as if I have this great store of knowledge about queer issues, and a burning desire to enlighten the world. It's not as if I am confident enough to use my real name in this article.

I guess the reason I really wanted to write this article was to make sense of my life, and while doing so, spill my guts to complete strangers.

I guess I could say that I was never like anyone else I had ever met. The only thing is, I never knew why until I was about thirteen or fourteen. After I found out, I wished that I had never been born. I mean, all your life you do everything to try and fit in with everyone else, and then you realize that something separates you even more.

I never had any gay friends. I never knew an openly gay person before this year. I was afraid, then I was bulimic, then I was suicidal. There were times when would have done absolutely anything to make myself "normal", to make myself want to describe my heterosexual conquests to anyone that would listen, like any other of my friends, and to not feel so completely alone.

In retrospect, I can say it's odd that I thought I was the only one in my whole entire high school who was queer. Now, I go through old school yearbooks and see who I can peg with my gaydar. It's actually quite a useful tool...

I would be lying if I said I expected to come out when I was still in cégep, especially because of the cégep I go to. I planned to go away to university, where I would hopefully feel comfortable enough to be me. However, you learn through experience that what life has in store for you is usually not what you would expect.

My coming out was very unexpected, and seemed to



GRAPHIC BY RHONDA. PRINTED IN "LESBIAN CONTRADICTION", SUMMER 1994

happen so fast that it almost passed me by. Thinking about it now I can only equate it to watching a movie — probably a very bad one — on fast forward. Within three weeks of telling my best friend, I had told my parents, my brother and sister, most of my good friends, and even started going to some LBGM coming-out meetings.

I go to a school with a very homophobic student population. Posters for our "Queer Positive" group are ripped down left and right, and it sometimes seems that people monitor what they say and do very carefully for fear someone will brand them, God forbid, a queer.

I think being queer is fun. I like being able to talk to my friends about my latest attraction. I like the fact that my mother says she still wants to meet my dates (she said it doesn't matter if they're male). Most of all, I like being able to be that person that stayed bottled up for so many years. But homophobia is frightening.

I remember talking to someone I knew in my psychology class about homosexuality and psychopathology. My psychology professor, to my utter amazement, did indeed examine this subject in class, saying something like, "Homosexuality is not considered a disease." It took him about three seconds.

Anyway, after class I was

talking to this girl about homosexuality in our school, just to get a reaction. She said, "Gays here? In this school? There are no gays here. How could there possibly be gays here? I most certainly don't know any." I remember quietly standing there, smiling, and thinking, "Well, there's at least one."

More vividly, however, I remember talking to someone in one of my classes this semester who told me that all homosexuals should burn in hell and will ultimately do so. This, to say the least, is not an environment that makes people feel safe enough to be open and honest.

I just know that counting myself, I know about eight queer people in my school. Though I honestly can't say for sure, out of sixteen hundred students, I think there are more than eight of us. I call it a hunch, although maybe it's more of a hope. Okay, I can admit it. I hope that really cute guy from my humanities class last semester that I talk to sometimes in the halls is gay.

For me, accepting myself was the difficult part. Telling people was easy. If they felt uncomfortable, it certainly wasn't my problem. Two weeks ago, someone asked me whether I would make myself straight if I could. This must be a question every queer person has been asked. Today, I say the answer is no. I don't want to be anyone else but me.

Going home to Bigotville

I grew up in a really beautiful town, which, for the purposes of this article, I will call Bigotville. Everyone knows each other in Bigotville, all the children grow up and get married to each other. People are brutally honest in Bigotville, and they will say to you, in plain language, that all the "raging feminist types" just don't know what it's like to live in the "real world".

And they will also say that all the gays should "be put on an island by themselves and blown straight to kingdom come."

I suspect that there are a lot of people in this city in my position. I'm quite comfortable being out to those who do not know anyone from my home town. I pick my friends very carefully to make sure that their paths will never cross with those of Bigotville residents who came to Montréal with me. And I hope for the best.

You hope that in class, for instance, they never happen to have the following conversation with Bigot X from your highschool: "Oh, did you go to school with her? Wow, because I met her at LBGM. Oh... you didn't know... well it doesn't mean she's actually a *lesbian*..."

Back home all of my closest friends know about my bisexuality. The first people I told were so cool about it I just kept telling more of them, and it was such a relief. Then it dawned on me that I'd told about nine people and was putting myself in danger. It was a difficult decision to start keeping this secret from peo-

ple whom I trusted. But I knew that the more people who knew, the easier it would be for me to be outed.

A lot of people here don't understand why I don't have the guts to come out. People who ask me this are often well meaning, but really must never have been to my town. How much the gay rights movement has affected your life really depends on where you live. All that I know of the gay movement I learned here — such information is not allowed to exist in Bigotville. I don't know a single non-straight person (at least who will admit it) back in Bigotville. I *do*, however, know people who would, quite

seriously, kill me if they knew I was bisexual.

I would have to start a movement if I wanted to be able to stay in my home town and be out simultaneously. I don't know if I'm strong enough to do that. And I don't know if

that's the way to change things back in Bigotville.

Yet, as much as I love the freedom I have here in Montréal, I am attached to Bigotville. It may sound like hell, but it's home to me. I can't stand the idea that I'll have to find a new place to live because I want to have relationships with women, because there are so many things that Bigotville needs. I can't turn my back on it just because it's far from perfect.

Better education, access to information, that's what Bigotville needs. And if I go home, hide the truth, and fight for Bigotville to have these privileges, maybe one day I'll be able to tell them who I am.

anonymous

I would have to start a
movement if I wanted to
be able to stay in my
home town and be out
simultaneously.

GAY RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS

Lesbian and gay McGill employees speak out

by raynald lepage

David really liked his in-laws. Now that his father-in-law had died, he wanted to go to his funeral as a testimony of his esteem towards the old man and his widow. Besides he felt it was appropriate to accompany his spouse at such a time.

He asked his supervisor for permission to take some bereavement leave. The request was granted. However when it became known that David's spouse was of the same gender, he was asked to make up the time.

This scenario is hypothetical, yet a situation like this could happen at McGill University. It is not just mere fiction. It is believed that homosexuals have no family ties and cannot have a long term relationship. But it is a fiction that they neither have attachment towards their companion's parents and relatives nor would the latter wish to have anything to do with their homosexual son or daughter's other half.

Lo and behold, there are homosexuals who happen to have long term relationships, have happy dealings with their in-laws and are considered part of a family.

When one considers that it is just considered "normal" for heterosexuals to attend their in-laws' funerals, one wonders why it is not possible for homosexuals to do the same. Is it not strange that something as ancient and as much identified with human nature as attending the funerals of beloved people could be denied to people simply on account of their sexual orientation? Are we to believe that some people are less human because their homosexual orientation is not socially valued as much as it would be if they were heterosexual? Should we not say that gays are reclaiming human rights that they have been denied?

Lesbian and Gay Employees of McGill supports the extension of bereavement leave to

same sex couples, as they currently apply to common law opposite-sex spouses, as well as many other rights of the same character. By demanding the same rights as heterosexuals, we are merely laying claim to basic human rights for gay people.

— Reynald Lapage is the president of LAGEM

compiled by
anup grewal

A short history of LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND GAY ACTIVISM



5 →



Ancient Egypt and Greece — Homosexuality was open and accepted. Young Greek boys traditionally left their families to become the lovers of adult men.

The Crusades — Religious warriors persecuted gays, lesbians and bisexuals along with heretics and pagans. 1811 — British courts debate whether a sexual relationship between women is even possible.

Late 19th century — LBG clubs, bathhouses and hotels flourish. Walt Whitman celebrates "manly friendship", among other things.

1897 — The first social movement for civil rights for gays is formed in Germany.

20TH CENTURY

The 20th century has seen the dramatic suppression as well as an equally dramatic re-emergence of the lesbian, gay and bisexual movement.

1900-1930s — German Scientific-Humanitarian Committee studies homosexuality.

1920s — The LBG community continues to flourish in Germany. A united front of LBG people, called the World League for Sexual Reform boasts worldwide membership. Many countries experience an emergence of LBG society.

1924 — The Society for Human Rights forms in the USA, is LBG positive.

1930s — LBG communities remain active around the Western world, especially in Germany.

World War II-1950s — The Holocaust, followed by the terrors of McCarthyism and the general fear of communists and other "abnormal" people, effectively arrests efforts of the lesbians, dissexuals and gays to make their voices heard.

Here in Canada, this suppression manifested itself through Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raids and rampant discrimination by both the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB).

1969 — a pivotal year because it marked the beginning of the second wave of LBG demands for social justice in the world, in Canada, in Montréal and at McGill. On June 27th riots against a po

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

COMMUNAUTÉ HOMOSEXUELLE AU CÉGEP

AMÉLIORATION INCERTAINE

par jean-françois corbett

La communauté lesbienne et gaie des cégeps se trouve dans une situation particulière et pour le moins ambiguë. Sa condition s'améliore lentement et très rares sont les personnes qui affirment ouvertement leur homosexualité.

« La population étudiante est très ouverte, réceptive et favorable aux droits des gays et lesbiennes », affirme Nathalie Di Palma, présidente de l'Association des gays et lesbiennes du cégep du Vieux-Montréal. Elle admet néanmoins qu'elle est la seule à affirmer ouvertement son homosexualité dans les corridors. « Les homosexuels ont peur de s'afficher et préfèrent taire le sujet », explique Ghyslain Bisson, étudiant au cégep André-Laurendeau qui tente présentement d'y démarrer une association de gays et lesbiennes.

« Il n'y a pas de discrimination directe », explique Carle Bernier, ex-responsable de l'Association des gays et lesbiennes du cégep Maisonneuve (AGLM). Les gays et lesbiennes sont plutôt intimidés par l'attitude des hétérosexuels envers l'homosexualité. « Quand quelqu'un raconte une blague homophobe, on ne se sent pas

enclin à lui affirmer notre homosexualité », souligne-t-il, et comme plusieurs répètent ces blagues, « cela ne fait plus beaucoup de monde à qui s'ouvrir! »

Pour ce qui est des manifestations concrètes d'homophobie, elles semblent être l'œuvre d'individus isolés. Deux personnes ont fait parvenir des lettres haineuses à l'AGLM l'an dernier, rappelle Guillaume Lalonde, responsable actuel de l'AGLM. Les lettres étaient toutefois demeurées sans suite. De plus, Carle Bernier rapporte qu'un professeur du cégep a déjà distribué, dans le cadre de son cours, des textes contenant des informations erronées sur l'homosexualité.

Cela semble toutefois être un cas d'exception. Les corps professoral et administratif de la plupart des cégeps font, en général, preuve d'ouverture. « Il y a même un cours sur l'homosexualité ici », nous révèle Carole Choinière, présidente d'Et cetera, l'association des gays et lesbiennes du cégep Dawson. Nathalie Di Palma qualifie l'administration de « très coopérative » : « Le service du socio-culturel nous aide et l'infirmière ainsi que les psychologues nous réfèrent les gays

et lesbiennes qui ont besoin d'aide. »

Cependant, « il y a un manque flagrant de ressources au cégep », soutient Ghyslain Bisson, et ces ressources diffusent souvent des « dépliants mal présentés et plus ou moins exacts » : « Il y a un énorme travail de démythification à faire. » Cette situation est particulièrement difficile dans les cégeps où il n'y a aucune association de gays et lesbiennes : la diffusion de l'information y est profondément déficiente.

Guillaume Lalonde, de l'AGLM, affirme que la principale tâche de son organisme est de distribuer quantité d'informations pertinentes sur l'homosexualité. Au cégep du Vieux Montréal, où l'association des gays et lesbiennes est très active, les renseignements concernant l'homosexualité affluent sur la population étudiante, notamment lors de la semaine de visibilité gaie. « Plusieurs kiosques sont organisés à l'entrée même du cégep et les organismes gays de Montréal sont invités », affirme Nathalie Di Palma. La fierté gaie est alors exposée au grand jour.

Une organisation active de gays et lesbiennes au cégep semble donc un atout majeur pour la

reconnaissance de la condition homosexuelle. Ghyslain Bisson, qui tente de démarrer un tel regroupement au cégep André-Laurendeau, s'attend à une amélioration de la condition des gays et lesbiennes, non pas dans l'immédiat, mais à plus long terme, après l'instauration de son association. « Nous avons un club établi, il y a beaucoup de monde qui participe à la vie du club », souligne Carole Choinière d'Et cetera. « Le groupe aide les gays et lesbiennes à s'accepter envers eux-mêmes. »

Toutefois, déclare Carle Bernier, « le jour où la situation changera est le jour où tous les gays et les lesbiennes s'affirmeront ouvertement ».

Pour inciter les membres de la communauté gaie et lesbienne des cégeps à s'affirmer ouvertement, il faudra des associations de gays et lesbiennes plus actives. De telles associations nécessiteront l'affirmation d'un plus grand nombre de gays et lesbiennes. Reste à voir si la majorité hétérosexuelle sera prête à faire sa part pour faciliter ce processus et aider la communauté homosexuelle à sortir de l'ombre.

ADOPTION IN QUEBEC

How easy is it?

by alex mathias

Since January, gay and lesbian adoption has been legal in theory, but in practice it is not always possible. Under the Civil Code of Québec, same-sex couples are legally able to adopt, but when they go through screening processes they are usually denied.

The gay community is frustrated with this discrimination. Louis Labrie, a chairperson at the Association des pères gais de Montréal, says that for same-sex couples, "adoption is almost impossible". According to Labrie, it is easier for a homosexual man to get a woman pregnant and adopt from her, than to go to an adoption agency, because he can prove that the child and he are biologically related. He said many gay men are forced to go to this extreme. The problem is that the Civil Rights Code does make same-sex adoptions legal, "but the mentality of people has not changed", he says.

Richard Roderigue, head of the adoption service in Québec, feels differently about the issue. He says "you have to be aware that adoption is not a right, it's a privilege... We have a responsibility of finding the best family for the child." He goes on to say, "I think that considering the evolution of society, the family is very important, and that includes two people of the opposite sex."

As of January 1, 1994, in the Civil Code of Québec, Article 546 states, "any person of full age may, alone or jointly with another person, adopt a child." This clearly allows for homosexual persons to adopt, either alone or as a same-sex couple.

Article 543 states that "no adoption may take place except in the interest of the child and on the conditions prescribed by law." This clause is where the problems for the homosexual community come in.

According to Yanick Landrie, a member of the Administrative Council of the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Legal Clinic, social workers usually think that living with a same-sex couple would not be a good environment for a child. Therefore, Article 543, advocating for the 'best interest of the child', is invoked to deny a same-sex couple adoption rights. Landrie sees this as "pure discrimination based on bias."

Unfortunately, no same-sex adoption cases have ever come to court in Québec, so there is no case law on which to base a precedent. Landrie suggests the reason for this is, "when you've been rejected you want to see a therapist instead of a lawyer." Labrie says a difficulty for the gay community is that "we don't have other couples to rely on as models."

The recent change in the Civil Code of Québec regarding adoption practices is a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, Landrie says, "we really have a long way to go".

by
maddie
lohman

HATE IS NOT A "FAMILY VALUE"

Anti-gay legislation and the American Right

Living within the limits of my carefully delineated world, it is easy for me to come to believe that everyone is for the same things I am. In regards to homosexuality, this results in the occasional conviction that being queer has somehow ceased to be an issue.

I feel sometimes that everyone is making progress towards the acceptance of queers, and everyone views this as progress. One does not have to look far to see that this is not the case. To some extent the state of the debate regarding the human rights of homosexuals has reached a deadlock, and in some cases the issue is taking what I perceive to be terrifyingly large steps backwards.

What is particularly frightening is that opponents of homosexuality in general have had time to experience defeat, to regroup, and to come back more organized, more zealous, and more clever than before. Often their agenda is cloaked in rhetoric that at first glance can seem harmless. This cleverness is what makes the threat to homosexual rights in some cases more real than ever.

The following is an entirely subjective, and by no means exhaustive tour of some of the spots where the issue is at a

point of crisis. Most of the stories are happening at a small, local level, because it is in this arena that much can happen without anyone noticing until it is too late.

First stop: Indiana

Our first stop is Indiana, where a story is in progress which should seem close to home, since it involves a university campus. Until now, Indiana University had no official office or department specifically addressing the needs of queers on campus. The University recently sought to establish an office of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Affairs (GLBA).

The university asked for \$50,000 in funding to establish and maintain such a service. The state legislators, stating that homosexuals were not a legitimate minority group, were so upset by the request that they proclaimed they would place the entire budget for the university under reconsideration.

In danger of losing money, Indiana U. withdrew the request. Instead, GLBA must rely on private funding from an unidentified source. The office has had to drop its name and join other groups under the in-

nocuous title of "Office of Student Ethics".

Education the 'American way'

One centre for the attack on homosexuality is institutions for education. If homophobia is promoted in the schools, a generation of hatred can be counted on to promote it. Keeping this in mind, let us move on to our next stop, Lakes County, Florida. The strong fundamentalist Christian right in this county realized that it needed to change tactics when Pat Robertson lost his race for the presidency.

The group's agenda thus became the infiltration of the political structure from the grassroots up. Members of the Christian right ran for offices on school district boards, as well as city and state offices. During their campaigns, the candidates would neither engage in debate, nor publicly proclaim their platform.

Drumming up support in church communities, a significant number of these candidates won their elections. It was only after they were securely elected that the new representatives made public their anti-abortion, anti-evolution and anti-homosexual stance.

er countries. The teacher's union is currently challenging the bill, but the power of the Christian right is demonstrated in this move.

The politicization of religious beliefs is the fuel that keeps many of these movements on course. A prime example of this can be seen in Colorado. The state is home to a lot of controversy surrounding homosexuality these days.

Of particular interest, is a men's movement known as the "Promise Keepers". Though not yet active in the political arena, they are relevant because they are currently planning a political agenda out of fundamentalist dogma, an agenda they plan to put in action once their numbers are strong enough. They are also relevant because they are a chilling example of the rhetorical genius of the new Christian right.

The Promise Keepers are a men's movement founded three years ago by former University of Colorado football coach and minister, Bill McCartney. Enrollment is currently at 20,000, though more than 225,000 have attended the events in stadiums across the country. The group



Top: Becky Smith and Glenna Fox are raising four children in Scappoose, Oregon. (photo from this month's issue of Out Magazine). Gays and lesbians in Oregon have worked through protest and funny handbills like this one (at right) to fight the seductive influence of anti-gay legislation sponsored by groups like the Oregon Citizens' Alliance and its ringleader Lon Mabon.



Lon Mabon says: "It's a complex world we live in these days. Things like common sense, personal experience, and clear thinking can be confusing. Often, rational thought can make you wonder if what you're doing is right. That's why we at the OCA offer an alternative. We offer a complete line of reasoning, designed especially to eliminate the troublesome, time-consuming process of thinking. Our system takes care of it all... who's right, who's wrong, what's good, and what's not. It's all part of our ongoing efforts to help you enjoy your life more... by helping you think a little less."

"It's Institutionalized!"
THE OREGON CITIZENS ALLIANCE
"More than just hatred... cowardice, too!"
A SOURCE OF IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE FOR OVER HALF A DECADE

Fairy tales and little dykelings

by maija martin

When I was seven, I wanted to know about sex. So my Mom took me on a trip to the library and we came back with an armload of books filled with diagrams, big words I didn't quite understand, and detailed explanations of mating in the animal kingdom. The word "homosexual" didn't come up in the books I was reading until I was much older.

Now there are a few children's books available that address LBG issues affecting children, such as what being gay means, what it's like to have gay

parents, and how to deal with a lack of social acceptance for these families.

Some books like *A Kid's First Book About Sex*, by Joani Blank and Marcia Quackenbush, are expanding the scope of sex education for kids. Incorporating masturbation, orgasms, definitions of "sexy", touching, and sexual orientation, this book offers an answer to the question of where babies come from. Intended for children under eleven, it asks kids questions like "Is there anyone you especially like to snuggle with?" and "What parts of your

body do you like the most?"

When it comes to sexual partners, it's explained very simply: "When two grownups have special feelings about each other, they may choose each other as sexual partners. Sometimes they choose someone who's the same sex as they are, and sometimes they choose someone who's the opposite sex"

Generally, most of the children's literature addressing homosexual issues focuses on life in a same-sex family.

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has a budget of \$3.2 million and a staff of 70. So what exactly do they do?

They claim they are devoted to the restoration of the man's place in the family. They believe as men they owe everyone a big huge apology for deserting their families, and thereby causing societal dysfunction.

The idea seems harmless enough at first, until one asks what exactly these societal dysfunctions are. The first ones mentioned are crime and racism. It is only much later, after one has already attended the meeting, that one learns that the rest of the "dysfunctions" include women divorcing their husbands, abortion, homosexuality, and the general "feminization of the American male".

In 1996 the Promise Keepers hope to organize a march of one million men on Washington, who will all kneel in prayer and ask for their masculinity back. A greater symbol of the gospel as politics could not be hoped for.

Not isolated events

One might be getting two impressions from this article so far. One is that all this is happening on a very small, isolated level, that does no concrete damage to the majority of gays. The other is that all Christians are raging homophobes.

To prove that neither is the case, let us consider Oregon, where the debate over homosexual rights is being waged on a large scale. In Oregon, the new right has been trying to strip homosexuals of all their dignity for a while now. The current installment of the saga is Measure 13, which will be voted on in the elections coming up on November 8.

Measure 13 is seen by some as the measure that will protect heterosexuals from being forced to give homosexuals absolute rule over their lives. It is seen by others as permanent, systematic, legal discrimination against a specific minority group.

If passed, Measure 13 would add an amendment to Oregon's constitution called "The Minority Status and Child Protection Act". The benevolent wording of this amendment is indicative of the campaign strategy of the Oregon Citizen's Alliance (OCA), the group pushing the measure.

The measure asks first that homosexuality shall not be granted

that homosexuality cannot be a minority classification because "some sexual activity is good, some is wrong. It's a personal, moral question."

Mabon continued his argument by saying, "Many people believe homosexuality is wrong. Our government should not be forcing acceptance of homosexuality upon its citizens and children... It isn't discrimination to oppose racism or drunkenness, is it?"

It is this line of reasoning which has led supporters of the bill to use the slogan "Equal Rights, Not Special Rights" to promote it. The implication is that to award people human rights for something that you believe is wrong is to give them "special rights". The OCA hopes that the use of a slogan like this will draw voters to the polls on November 8, in favour of the bill.

It is interesting to note, that among the most vocal opponents of Measure 13 is a large number of Christian communities. "People of Faith Against Bigotry" has come out opposed to the measure, saying "Faith teaches that all life is related, and all people are part of one whole. Faith teaches that we are all equal and deserve to have human rights protected."

Similarly, the council of the Oregon—Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church has stated that "homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth." When one compares these statements to the political agenda the Christian right is creating, one is left to wonder if they are all reading the same Bible.

minority status, and therefore will be exempt from such programs as affirmative action. Second, it demands that no school or government institution use funds in "a manner that has the purpose or effect of promoting or expressing approval of homosexuality".

The measure also includes the denial of marital status and spousal benefits for gays and lesbians. If passed, the measure will deny children access to literature that addresses homosexuality. And finally the proposed legislation would make it possible for an employee of the state or government to lose her/his job if her/his homosexual behavior "disrupts the workplace or otherwise violates this measure."

Some supporters of this measure will point to a homosexual conspiracy theory as justification for the bill. However, Lon Mabon, chairman of the OCA, has argued

"LBG ACTIVISM" FROM PAGE 5

lice raid of the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village begin the remobilisation of the LBG movement. The movement worked with a number of New Left groups in many social and civil rights issues, as well as focusing specifically on raising public consciousness of sexual diversity.

EARLY 1970s

This was a time of creative action and the formation of many groups and campaigns. The LBG movement began with attacks on the media for its influential and belittling portrayal of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals.

1970 — The North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) forms and involves itself in anti-war, pro-feminist, New Left causes.

The Gay Activists Alliance in USA, and the Front Homosexuel Action Révolutionnaire in France form. Almost every major city in North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand has an LBG liberation movement.

1971 — Pressure from the LBG movement in the USA succeeds in persuading the National Association of Mental Health to recommend a bill decriminalizing homosexuality.

1973-1974 — Pressure on the American Psychiatric Association succeeds in getting homosexuality removed from the list of psychiatric illnesses.

— The "Gender-funk" trend also gains fame in the early 1970's. People dress in such a way as to parody the conventions on dress for men and women.

— The Lesbian movement becomes more cohesive as it feels misrepresented by gay groups and the feminist movement. Groups like "Radicalesbians" form.

LATE 1970s and 1980s

The LBG movement becomes somewhat moderate as it faces a growing backlash from conservative groups. Many governments look at repealing any recent anti-discriminatory legislation on the basis of sexual orientation.

1977-1978 — Anita Bryant and a coalition of conservative religious leaders and politicians begin a strong, systematic and well coordinated campaign against gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The "pro-family/anti-gay" campaign begins.

1979 — Dan White assassinates Harvey Milk, an openly gay American public official, and is given a seven-year "manslaughter" sentence. This sparks "The White Night Riots" by the San Francisco gay community.

In both France and Germany, extremist anti-gay groups form, but hostility against sexual diversity stays out of the mainstream.

1981 — The Lesbian Mafia for Unorthodox Sex forms in the USA, as issues of pornography divide the women's and the queer movements.

1982 — In France, after pressure from



7 →

LBG groups, the Age of Consent is lowered to 15 and 156 gays convicted under the old law receive amnesty.

1984 — The European Parliament adopts legislation on the Civil Rights of gay peoples. The anti-pornography Dworkin-McKinnon Legislative Initiative is launched in the USA. It gains support from conservatives. The LBG movement in North America faces increasing censorship of its literature.

The biggest challenge of the Gay movement comes in the form of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. The initial idea that AIDS was a disease only for homosexual men made the voice of the anti-gay movement stronger. The AIDS crisis also unified the LBG movement to fight once more.

1983 — The Gay Men's Health Collective (in New York) and the Shanti Project (in San Francisco) form to help Gay men infected with AIDS.

1987 — The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) forms and pressures the US government to hasten the approval of drugs that would help those with AIDS. ACT-UP and many other groups continue to lead the movement for AIDS awareness and prevention, for both the LBG community and the heterosexual population.

1988 — "QUEER NATION" forms out of ACT-UP.

1990s

The LBG movement continues to fight for changes to social structures. There is an increasing focus on the family rights of Lesbians, Bisexuals and Gays. There have been a series of campaigns for same-sex benefits from Denmark to Canada, some successful, and others not. The religious right in the USA poses an increasing threat to LBG rights.

1993 — The European parliament backs down from its proposal to include legislation on same-sex benefits when the Pope issues a condemnation of such measures.

1993 — In Britain, the proposal by Edwina Currie for a change to the Age of Consent Law for women is defeated and a compromise is reached. LBG groups protest and the radical group "OUTRAGE" is formed.

CANADA

Canada's LBG movement parallels the LBG movement in general, but there are a few events which are unique to it.

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Bisexuals have long been attacked for being, among other things, fence sitters, indecisive individuals, and homosexuals trying to retain heterosexual privileges. Our existence has been trivialized, ignored, discredited.

In recent years there has been an increase in the awareness of bisexuals, but this has been mainly at the hands of monosexuals telling us who we are. It is time to take control of our lives, as bisexuals, into our own hands, to tell our own history and to define what we are for ourselves.

Bi Any Other Name has been an influential book in this process. I only discovered it this summer, even though it was printed in 1991. One of its coeditors, Loraine Hutchins, took the time out to talk to us about her book and the situation of the bisexual community. She is one of the founding national coordinators of BiNet USA and hopes to extend this network of communities into Canada.

Daily: When did you realize that you were bisexual? How did you feel about it then? What was coming out like for you? How did or do your family and friends feel about your sexual identity?

Loraine Hutchins: I first realized I was bi at the end of my college years. I felt great about it and excited, like new possibilities were opening for me because I'd felt [as if I were] under a lot of pressure to get married and I really didn't want to.

You ask what coming out was like for me, but I feel I'm still coming out, that every day is a choice about how much to risk and how fully to try to be free. I came out over 20 years ago, but I find, particularly as a bisexual, you aren't taken seriously until you come out again and again and firmly, quietly (or loudly) continue to insist on your right to love as it feels right for you.

My parents never took my sexual orientation seriously until the book was published 20 years after I first came out to them. They had to take it seriously then because I was outing them as parents of a bisexual. For me, I would rather not have had to have been so open with them, because it's painful. But I knew I had to be if I wanted to be honest and get my story out there.

We started from a point where my mother couldn't say the word "bisexual" without gagging and where she confided in my sister that she thought it was "worse than homosexuality", to the point where we are today, where she is playing a central mediation role in her church between the homophobes and the gays. When the church committee writes policy language that's not bi-inclusive, she calls them on that now too.

My father's pretty quiet, but when Dr. Nicolosi, the discredited "reparative" psychologist who believes he can change people back to straight, attacked me on CNN's Sonya Live talk show, my father finally got mad and told me he was proud of how I stood up to the creep.

Nicolosi's theory is that queerness is all the result of bad parenting. I think he's particularly dangerous to bisexuals, even more so than to gays in some ways, because bis are the ones he can

MOVING BEYOND BOUNDARIES, AWAY FROM STEREOTYPES

Bisexual feminist Loraine Hutchins talks about the bisexual community, and where it's going

by Derek Fung

claim to have the most "success" with if he gets them to suppress their same gender attractions and just concentrate on their opposite gender ones.

Another very difficult thing about coming out for me was asserting my bi identity within the lesbian community. I was constantly told I couldn't be trusted as much as a straight woman and then after AIDS, that I was a disease vector as well as a betrayer.

I've tried to meet this anger and fear with understanding and to keep trying to get beyond the stereotypes and prejudices, even though I know I've absorbed a lot of the hurt. It's helped me to understand... that in oppressed groups, members of the group often turn on each other and are self-destructive, rather than directing their/our rage where it belongs.

What are your experiences in the realm of bi-phobia? Do you feel that it is on the decline? Are people becoming more accepting, are the walls finally coming down?

People over-sexualize us, project their fears on us, pity us... I don't feel [that discrimination against bisexuals is] on the decline at all. If anything, it's been heightened with all this right-wing backlash.

What's different is that it's drawn lesbian and gay people closer to bisexuals than ever before. Even though many of us in all categories are still closeted, those who are out have learned that we need to support each other... I don't think the general public will become more accepting until society's eroto-phobia and sexism are dealt with.

So I don't see biphobia lessening in the near future. It might even get worse for awhile, but that's why we have to learn to deal with it better. There is a little more understanding from some segments of the population about what discrimination due to sexual orientation means, but there is such a polarization and panic about it, especially as it relates to women's autonomy in the family and people's right to have diverse kinds of families.

I read an article in "Anarchy" that talked about how the lesbian feminist movement feels that bi women are not real feminists and ostracize them for being attracted to

men. How do you feel about this as a multicultural feminist and a bi woman?

Tension between lesbians and bi women has decreased somewhat, but it is still very virulent and real. What's changed is that there are now more lesbians, particularly younger ones, who are more understanding of the fact that bisexual feminism for women is possible and there are now more bisexual women, who used to identify as lesbian, who are being more open and honest about why and how they changed their self-identity.

Some of the weight has shifted to trans-gender folk though, and there is a lot of prejudice and misunderstanding and some good questioning going on in that area now too. There are a lot of similarities between the bisexual and transgender communi-

usually the out bisexuals, those most comfortable in their identity, who are the most careful to [practice] safe sex.

Two, a lot of AIDS among heterosexuals is caused by IV drug use (sharing needles) and by blood transfusions. If you look at the latest sex survey study that came out last week, *Sex In America* by the folks from the University Research Center in Chicago, it claims that there are almost no bisexuals and that most married people don't have that much sex outside their relationships, especially not with people of sexual orientations different from themselves. So I don't know where all this scapegoating comes from except from envy and fear.

However, this misconception has often been accepted as fact and that has taken on a life of its own. No matter how many times

"Another very difficult thing about coming out for me was asserting my identity within the bisexual community. I was constantly told I couldn't be trusted as much as a straight woman and then after AIDS, that I was a disease vector as well as a betrayer."

ties even though there are differences too. We both are in the invisibilized middle between extremes.

Bisexuals have been targeted as being the people who brought AIDS into the heterosexual community. How has this affected the evolution of the bisexual community? Has it been unifying or devastating?

The first thing to say about bisexuals being targeted as the people who have brought AIDS into the heterosexual world is that it's not true for a number of reasons.

First, what is a bisexual? A lot of people who don't identify as bisexual occasionally have same-gender sex and often aren't safe about it either (I'm talking both gay and straight, here). It's

we say, anyone having unsafe sex can transmit HIV, and not people of a certain sexual identity. No matter how many times we say, it's behavior not labels... there will still be people saying we're the problem, because we blur the so-called "boundaries."

The fact that the boundaries themselves are a joke is never looked at, although bisexual activism has had a small effect in pointing out the scientific stupidity of this.

Another interesting thing about this scapegoating of bis around AIDS was a study done in the late 80's by the Kinsey Institute [a sex research institute] which showed that 40+ per cent of self-identified lesbians had had sex with men, often unsafe

and gathering to grieve our lost members has catalyzed a lot of us to come out and take a stand more openly as bisexuals than we did before. It has also helped to make our alliance with lesbians, gay men, and transgender people clear too, because we're all under attack.

So, it's been both unifying and devastating. A good example is the women's leadership of the bi movement. It's wonderful and has certainly made for less overt sexism than in the larger mixed gay movement, but still, I wish we didn't have to have the trade off between this empowerment of women's leadership and the loss of amazing, beautiful bi men, who were our leaders too and left before their time.

Bisexual activists Lani Kaahumanu and Loraine Hutchins

sex, often with men who were bi or gay in the last five years.

Yes, the AIDS crisis has, in some ways, created the bisexual community, it would have happened anyway, but not in this way or at this time, without AIDS. Mobilizing to fight AIDS





DAILY PHOTOS BY DEREK FUNG

Lorraine Hutchins (below), coedited the book *Bi Any Other Name*. Amy and Joanna (above) have fun at the bisexual discussion group sponsored by Lesbians, Bisexuals and Gays of McGill.

Nothing justifies this sacrifice, the cutting short of their lives. One reason *Bi Any Other Name* has more women's voices than men's voices in it is that the men were dying while we were writing it and some of them were too sick to contribute.

whether they choose to be?

By the very fact of posing the question that way, you stigmatize it. I'm really concerned with the conservative wing of the gay movement that has retreated into this "we're just like you straights, we just love the same gender, we're born

ry, bibliography of books, etc. These are great for handouts at workshops and conferences.

...There are hundreds of bi organizations around the world at this point and that there is now a movement, even if it's very decentralized.

step at a time.

... PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) conference last month in San Francisco had a large bisexual presence there too. That was important as many PFLAG chapters have been bad about telling parents that, if your kids tell them they're bi they're probably "really gay and just haven't realized it yet."

Sometimes that's true, but it's also just as true that people can say they're gay or even say they're heterosexual, because they haven't realized they're bi yet. PFLAG needs to tell the whole truth, as does society.

The most stabilizing force in the bi movement

the last two years has been the formation of BiNet USA, which now has six national coordinators and 20 regional delegates from around the country. We publish a newsletter, hold regional meetings and meet nationally once a year. This year, some Canadians were present at our regional meetings and there was talk of a cross border network being created.

Personally, I have been inspired and touched by *Bi Any Other Name*. How do you feel about it and putting it together? Was it fulfilling? What has been the reaction to the anthology?

The reaction to the anthology has been tremendous. Even three years later, people are constantly coming out to me wherever I

go and telling me about how the book changed their life.

It feels great to have helped birth it. The book changed my life too. It gave me much more courage and hope and vision than I've ever had before and has helped me to meet amazing people. That's the most exciting part!

Are there any other good bi anthologies out there? Are there any books that talk about the bisexual community and its history?

There are a number of great new bi books coming out or already out. Look for *Closer to Home: Feminism and Bisexuality* by Elizabeth Reba Weise and *Bisexuality and Women* by Sue George (a British publication). Coming next year will be Naomi Tucker's *Bisexual Politics* anthology (which I have a piece in) and Beth Firestein's *Bisexuality and Psychology* textbook. Both Dr. Paula Rust from Hamilton College in upstate New York and Dr. Ron Fox from San Francisco are also doing some excellent survey work on bisexuals, look for their publications soon.

There's a new book on bi theory being developed and another bi anthology coming out of Emory University I believe. The best place to hear about all of this, I find, is on the Internet.

For info on BiNet USA write to P.O. Box 7327, Langley Park, MD 20787-7327, 202/986-7186. For \$5 you can order copies of the International Directory of Bisexual Groups from: Bisexual Resource Center, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140, 617/338-9595.

...starting my bi identity within the lesbian much as a straight woman and then, betrayer." — Lorraine Hutchins



A philosopher proposed a theory that everyone is inherently bisexual. How do you feel about this? How much truth do you think there is in this theory in your experience?

Well, here's my answer to that. I feel that there is an almost universal capacity to be bisexual, but I hesitate to proclaim it from the treetops — mostly because it just ends up intimidating and alienating those who aren't open to dealing with it and I don't want to do that. I'd rather build bridges... What is wrong with diversity and tolerance?

This question reminds me of the big debate about whether people are "born gay" or not. Excuse me, but why aren't we worrying about whether people are "born straight" or "born prejudiced" or

that way, we didn't choose it", implying they can't help it.

What's wrong with choice? Maybe some of us are born that way and some of us choose it. I think we should defend choice too. I want to have the right to choose and defend others' rights to choose.

Can you tell me a bit about the... recent political history of the bi community?

[Boston's Bisexual Resource Center] also publish little pamphlets on the History of the Bi Movement, for instance: *Bisexuality: Some Questions Answered*, *Why Gay & Lesbian Organizations Include Bisexuals*, *Using the Klein Scale to Teach About Sexual Orientation*, *Les-BiGay and Transgender Glossa-*

One thing I emphasize is that, because of the nature of our cause, as people situated between polarized identities, we often do our best work in coalition and within other groups. We need a separate bi movement for sanity and clarity, but a lot of the progress comes from networking within other groups too. The 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation is a good example.

Including bi in the name was a last minute, close vote fight. We won and this made history, it's never happened before and has helped to increase bi visibility a lot. Of course we've still got a long way to go and Stonewall wasn't much help, but you live and you learn and take it one

"LBG ACTIVISM" FROM PAGE 7

1968 — Pierre Trudeau declares that "the State has no place in the bedrooms of the nation" and proposes to change the Consent Law.

1969 — The law of "Consenting Adults in Private" is created in the Federal legislature.

1970s

1970-1972 — LBG groups, such as The Gay Liberation Front (in Vancouver), Front de Liberation Homosexuel (in Montréal) and Gay Action (in Toronto), form.

1977 — Police raid the office of "Body Politic", an LBG magazine in Toronto. The LBG community protests against police brutality.

1978: Anita Bryant comes to Toronto to educate the Canadian population about the "dangers of homosexuality".

1980s

1980 — Toronto Mayor John Sewell supports openly Gay City Council candidate George Hislop. They are both defeated.

1981 — Ontario's Conservative government increases the number of police raids conducted on LBG establishments and makes several arrests.

1982 — Despite much support for the measure, a bill to add "sexual orientation" to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is defeated.

1984 — Svend Robinson, a British Columbia M.P., comes out.

1990s

1993-1994 — The provincial governments in B.C. and Ontario attempt to pass same-sex marriage and spousal benefit laws. In both cases, the results are disappointing and the LBG movement reacts with strong commentaries, but little action.

Sept 1994 — Liberal MP Roseanne Skoke sparks much protest from the LBG community with her anti-homosexual remarks in the House of Commons during a debate about Bill C-41, a measure recommending revisions to the criminal code to include hate crimes such as those based on sexual orientation.

Nov 1994 — Bloc Québécois member Réal Ménard comes out after Skoke's comments.

MONTREAL
1970s

1976 — In preparation for the Olympic games in Montréal, the police conduct a "clean up" campaign which targets and intimidates the LBG community. The community is re-energised and forms the Association Pour les Droits des Gaies Québec (ADGQ).

1977 — The ADGQ campaigns to amend the Québec Charter of Human Rights and, on December 15,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

QUEER CULTURE IN ITALY

by "Troia" Davidson

Paris can be as *gai* as it pleases, but two months in Italy taught me that when in Rome, doing as the Romans do does not always include being lesbian, bisexual or gay. While the Catholic Church enjoys keeping the closet door tightly closed on the country's sodomites, the silence surrounding lesbianism is even more eerie. Despite all of this, Queerness is alive and well in Italy.

Any traveller will immediately notice the economic, linguistic and cultural differences between northern and southern Italy. These differences also extend to ideas about sexuality. The Italian urban centres of the north resemble their sister cities in Western Europe in that lesbians, bisexuals and gay men enjoy and benefit from Queer institutions and services. However, Southerners may remain available to same-sex intimacy, but coming out of the closet is just as taboo as confessing to hating soccer.

Milan wears the crown of Italy's Queerdom. In addition to the possibility of hob-nobbing with supermodels and fashion designers, the Queer of Milan enjoy a plethora of bars, clubs, restaurants and community services. For the most up-to-date information on Milan's happenings, be sure to pick up a copy of *Babilonia*, Italy's best LBG cultural magazine. The hottest club for grrrlie-Grrrls remains *Sottomarino Giallo* (Via Donatello), which means "Yellow Submarine". The most frequented boy-discos include *Falk* on Wednesdays (Via S. Maria Segreta) and *Killer Plastic O* on Thursdays (Viale Umbria). Milanese Club Kids can count on spending many a *Lira* on their nights out, since cover charges hover around £35.000 (\$30 Cdn) and drinks go down smoothly at £12.000 (\$10 Cdn). In the sweltering summer months, much of Milan is closed, but Rimini, on the Adriatic Coast, converts into a real beehive of sea-side fun.

Just south of Milan is Bologna, home of Europe's oldest university and the cradle of Italy's modern-day Queer Liberation movement, headed by a large student population. Although this is not the largest of Italy's cities, it houses a very extensive archive collection on homo- and bisexuality. *Matilda* declares itself the favourite safe space in town, being womyn-only on Thursdays,

men-only on Fridays and mixed on Saturdays.

If you ever find yourself studying at Italy's International University in Perugia, you may die of starvation for safe out-space, as I did. At first glance, the only sign of a pulse in the non-het scene was a handful of two-month-old posters that advertised a "LesboParty" on the outskirts of town. Even the International Day of LBG Pride passed uneventfully: in Perugia the entire celebration consisted of ten posters heralding the event with exotic American expressions like "Coming Out" and "You better work".

Judging from the graffiti in every boys' washroom at the university, anyone excited by tea-room prospects could indulge in a myriad of intimate encounters if they so desired. Despite the circulation of a hopeful rumour on the same washroom walls, *Merlin's Pub* is *not* gay on Monday nights. However, *Red Zone*, one hour outside Perugia, offers a multi-level, super popular, mixed discothèque from September to mid-June. Its summer closing bash attracted drag queens, Italian club fags and club dykes, and a sprinkling of enlightened and beautiful straights.

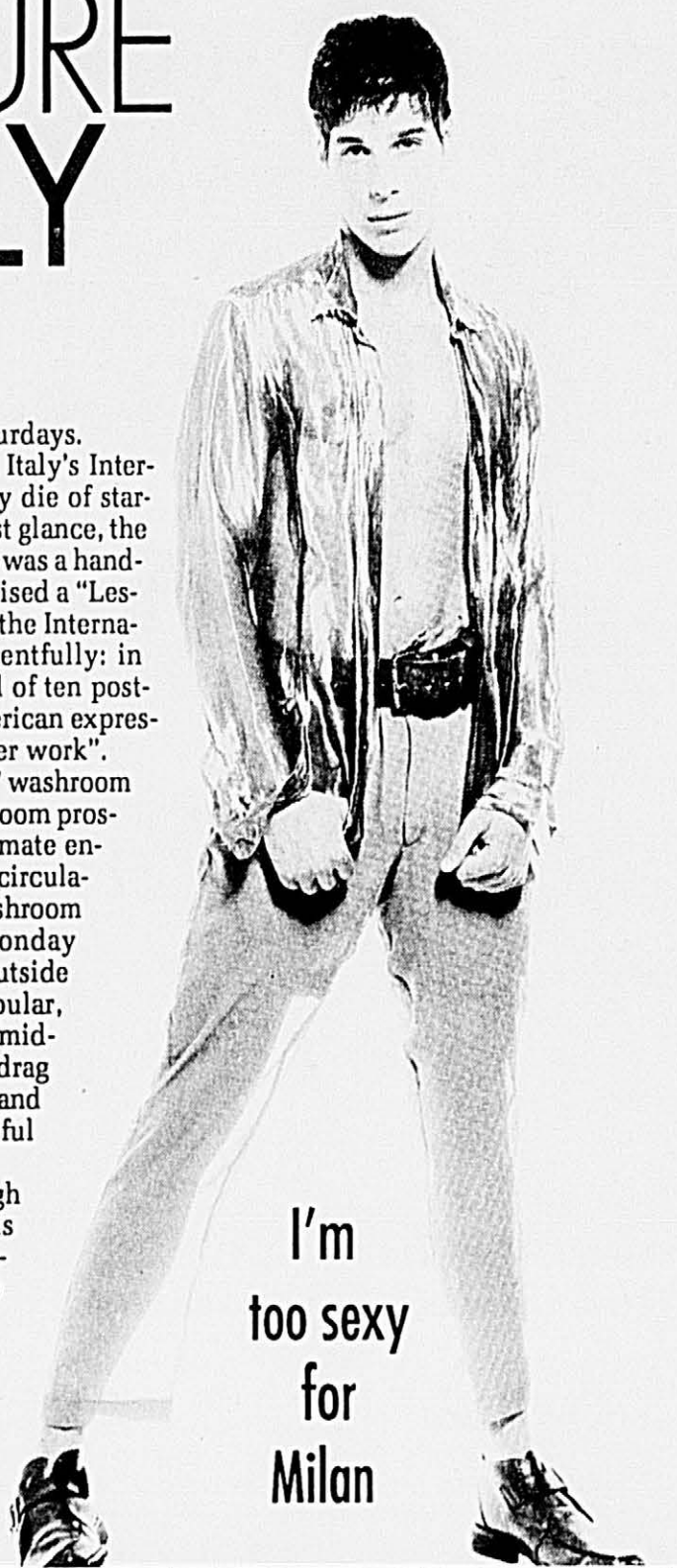
If you were brave or desperate enough to frequent a straight club, *Étoile '54* is very popular with foreign and local students. The Go-Go Boys here look like dancers from a Madonna tour and are more plucked and painted than Linda Evangelista. Nonetheless, they maintained that they were heterosexual. Straight?! Straight to bed is more like it!

I quickly discovered that many an Italian delights in same-sex intimacy but refuses to acknowledge that they are not straight.

In Florence's *Tabasco Bar*, one sassy man (who apparently loves to charm innocent Canadian boys) recounted the tales of his passionate gay sex life, but insisted he was straight because he had a fiancée. After sharply criticising this flawed logic, my straight Finnish gal-pal and I decided to leave.

Tucked away in a small alley within Florence's Piazza della Signoria, *Tabasco* boasts about being Italy's first gay disco, established in 1974. Unfortunately, it has nothing to boast about, since its busiest evenings lure only a scattering of people, and its cover charge is a hideous £25.000 (\$20 Cdn). *Crisco Club* is a newly renovated gay bar, but their men-only policy scared me and my Finnish friend away.

Grazie a Dio, the lack of safe Queer space in Italy is compensated by the country's unparalleled history, culture, architecture, art, and scenery. While my trip back to Canada was a trifle more complicated than clicking my ruby slippers together three times, I appreciate Montréal's Queer Culture enough to declare with pride, "There's no place like home!"



I'm
too sexy
for
Milan

Lesbians, bisexuals and gay men in children's books

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The following is a sample of some of the books available in Montréal:

Asha's Mums by Rosamund Elwin and Michele Paulse is about a girl with lesbian parents who has to explain to her teacher and her classmates how come she has two mothers.

Families by Alyette Jenness is a series of portraits about different kinds of families told from children's perspectives. It features children of single parents, children in foster families, children living in communal homes, and children with gay parents. For instance, Elliott talks about living with his gay parents, "Papa Dimitri" and "Daddy Tom". Jody talks about her defensiveness towards her mother's lesbian lover when her mother first came out.

How Would You Feel if Your Dad Was Gay? by Ann Heron and Meredith Maran. In answer to this question Jasmine, the little star of

the book, answers, "Sometimes a little weird, but mostly good."

Two Moms, the Park and Me by Johnny Valentine is about a boy having to deal with other people's judgments about his lesbian parents, on top of his being lost in the park.

Daddy's Roommate by Michael Willhoite is an illustrated tale of a boy's life with his gay father told through their fishing trips and their bedtime stories.

Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin by Suzanne Bosche is a photographic account of a girl's everyday life with two male parents.

Unfortunately, many of these books cannot be found in public libraries, but only in specialty bookstores aimed at lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men. Although they are mostly very good, they remain accessible only to children whose parents have the money, inclination and time to investigate sexuality as an issue.

The Moving of Me

social healer
people healer
woman healer
self healer
sisters.

She looks into my eyes
and her eyes know, they know—
they wise.
She smiles into my mouth
and she feels my curve
slanting South;
she twists into me,
and I into her
at a flicker of a glance—
knowing words, sensing words.
Flicker, like a finger
flame leaping out
just second—a flashing moment
feeling the connection
the benevolence
the All-knowing:

"I've been here before"

"...and I have as well..."

"I've been around, and the stories, they sound Old—but New—
renewing,

I FELT THEM IN YOU."

like a bursting,

resonating

connection—

a strong, aching detection.

a path in eden without towers,

but the towers of the Mind

and the mind's Eyes

and the way they whip back

when yours look into mine;

they smile

they look;

your eyes and your mouth

MINE OPEN, I'M OPEN—

feelings rush out

like a river, and rolling

and always exploding

like a RUSH, a wave,

a love imploding

from the crush/riseup

of the women we're holding

— by M.

The Feminine Man

As morning arrives he opens his eyes,
That in no time shall be covered with colors.
His first words are heard, his last ones are uttered,
As he runs down the path with his red painted lips and self
sculpted aura.

He paces along in the cruel crowded streets.
Where behind him he hears but tries not to listen.
He sees people's eyes, frowns and different expressions,
When suddenly, he turns and screams out his frustration.

He waits for a bus, sits and crosses his legs,
Or frantically runs to seek shelter from the cold autumn rain.
He sways his wrist as he gracefully walks,
And with a gentle kiss says goodbye.

Many say he looks like a woman.
Some say women look like him.
Few say that he is androgynous.
None say that he looks like a man.

If his heart and soul allow him the strength
To conquer the fear of living day after day,
He may get to night time and not shed a tear.
Alas tearless slumber comes seldom. Let us just say.

— Cherry Blossom/Jorge Salcedo

Three of a kind

The scene is that of three of a kind.
A man and another and another one.
The first sees the second, the second sees the first
And the third looks and waits for his turn.

The trio sits alone in a room.
They talk, they look, they touch each other.
A hand strokes one's hair, one's chest, one's inner thigh.
They're friends, they're partners, some kind of brothers.

Time passes by and bare become their bodies.
One is black, one is white, one is some sort of brown.
Tom sits down on top of Robby
And Greg explodes in joyful frowns.

Beads trickle down each man
As if to run from the inevitable eruption.
That act that people can,
But see as some sort of corruption.

— Cherry Blossom/Jorge Salcedo

Confessions of a demi-dyke

Celeste... I feel I know so little about you. At the
same time, I both adore and dread the few hours a
week we spend together. I noticed you for the very
first time during my first year. I even approached
you once, though I know not what possessed me to
do so.

You were unlocking the door to your office and,
for some reason, I actually thought that you had
glanced at me. I smiled back and greeted you. You
gave me an odd look and simply said, "Do I know
you?" You entered your office; I remained in the
hallway, looking like a complete and utter idiot.

And now, two years later, I find myself as one
of your students. In class I openly exhibit pieces of
lesbian literature, hoping they will catch your in-
terest. Your voice is sexy beyond belief, and I must
force myself not to drift off in its hypnotic melody.
I wonder if you at all sense what is going on.

For, at times, I suspect that I am receiving sig-
nals from you as well. You invite me to visit your
apartment as soon as the semester is over — you
have some books that might interest me. Are you
merely being friendly, or should I suspect more?

It is possible that you've noticed the way I watch
you and, as a result, feel it is better to wait, even if
our visit is purely of an academic nature. It would
be awkward if, after a few glasses of wine, I would
suddenly begin telling you how beautiful you are...
A precarious situation, indeed.

So, Celeste... Should I question your intentions?

Or should I lose all hope? What should I think
when every so often you wink at me, or with
your hand caress my shoulder, or when you
glance at me sideways with an ever-so-seductive
smile?

For the next two months, I am trapped in
this web of uncertainty, worshipping every mo-
ment I catch a glimpse of you. In class, as you
lecture ever so eloquently, in the halls, when we
sometimes meet by chance, and on those rare
occasions when we even get to touch.

Like that moment, when in the crowded ele-
vator, your breasts brushed against my arm ever
so softly. My body began to tremble. I blushed
and apologized. I wondered... what if I were to
extend my arms and draw you closer to me?
Caressing your petite frame... our bodies becom-
ing one...

If only it would be your wish too.
— Betka



11 →



Lesbian Filipinas CELEBRATING A find a home COMMON BOND in Babaylan

by katrina abarcar

What do you do if you're a Filipina lesbian in Toronto who doesn't feel at home in any community? Come to Babaylan. Since late fall of 1993, Babaylan has been dealing with the issues and interests of Filipina lesbians.

"We are trying to relate lesbian issues to the overall struggles of Filipino people... to not just look at our issues based on sexual practice, but to look at those issues in a broader political context [as well]," said Babaylan's Melanie Liwanag.

The group essentially adds a global dimension to their issues. Members look at how they, as Filipinas, came to be in Canada. Their presence here is not an accident. Rather, it is problems in the Philippines, such as foreign domination, neo-colonialism, and semi-feudalism, which promote oppressive economic and political structures.

These force Filipinos to migrate to Canada just to survive. The group recognizes this need and works to support the struggles against these forces in the Philippines. Members explained that they see the oppression of people in the Philippines as linked to the problems Filipina lesbians, women, and immigrants face in Canada.

As there is no word for "lesbian" in Tagalog (lesbians are referred to as "tomboys"), the group came up with the name Babaylan. As Liwanag explained, "The babaylan were women healers, priestesses, counselors, decision makers, and held important positions in society during pre-colonial times in the Philippines."

She added, "They were the first to lose their position to the sword and cross of Spain and organized and led the Philippine populus against Spanish colonization. They were the women warriors. It was in their fighting spirit that we wanted to remember our herstory as well as to acknowledge the current women's movement — struggles against

patriarchy and all struggles for freedom and peace and genuine national liberation."

Filipina lesbian activism

The group has about 20 members. Right now, it is composed of mainly Filipina youth (who identify themselves as Filipina lesbians), but it is multi-sectoral in that its members come from varying classes, backgrounds, and vocations. The group has worked as a social, political, cultural and support group.

Members have participated in rallies (on International Women's Day, Lesbian Pride Day, and a protest against the fiftieth anniversary of Breton Woods), have performed plays based on certain events, and have organized special events.

Babaylan most recently organized a protest on October 28 of this year. This date holds particular significance in Filipina women's history as, on October 28, 1983, different

ecutive director of the Children's Rehab center).

The focus of the protest was on the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, their imposed structural adjustment plans, and the Philippines 2000 program and its impact on women and children in the Philippines.

Liwanag said she believes the group has definitely made an impact on the Filipino community, the women's community, and the lesbian community, as it is the first Pinay lesbian group in Toronto. She added that the group is also reflective of the fact that there are more "out" Pinay lesbians.

Liwanag said, "The group builds community. From my experience, I think first generation immigrants like us grow up isolated. We don't learn about our culture and history, and we experience sexism, racism, and homophobia. We need to be strongly rooted to combat it."

Babaylan itself is also working on forming ties with lesbian, gay and bisexual groups in the Philippines and Filipino lesbian, gay, bisexual groups, which are cropping up in North America. Lesbian, gay and bisexual Filipinos marched with their banners on Philippine Independence Day in New York.

In the Philippines, for Pride Day, lesbian, gay and bisexual groups held protests against the value added tax (VAT), which was imposed by the IMF and the World Bank.



Comprendre et combattre l'homophobie

par marie-violaine boucher

Voici, enfin, un ouvrage en français qui s'intéresse au phénomène complexe de l'homophobie. *La peur de l'autre en soi; du sexisme à l'homophobie* regroupe les résultats de recherches menées au Québec, en France et en Allemagne par des gens qui, tout en étant rigoureux et extrêmement critiques, tentent de cerner le problème avec une envie manifeste de le combattre.

À la fois « produit et [...] pilier du sexisme », l'homophobie ne peut être vaincue que si l'on procède d'abord à une « déconstruction du masculin », soutiennent les trois co-directeurs du livre. Selon eux, l'homophobie est « une réaction provoquée par la peur de l'autre [l'homme ou la femme] en soi ». Chez plusieurs hommes, cette peur apparaît au cours du passage de l'enfance à l'âge adulte, pendant lequel ils doivent acquiescer (au prix de violences diverses) masculinité et virilité, pour se différencier de l'autre, de la femme, sans quoi ils sont marginalisés. D'où le rejet sub-séquent de ceux qui n'ont pas réussi ce passage et qui affichent des traits ou comportements dits féminins et, par conséquent, inférieurs.

Inversement, on encourage la femme à se distinguer le plus possible de l'homme en développant et en affichant sa féminité, qui assure sa *désirabilité*: d'où l'homophobie de certaines femmes envers celles qui ne veulent pas se plier (et souffrir comme elles l'ont fait... pensons à l'épilation!) aux exigences de la féminité pour plaire aux hommes.

Selon Daniel Welzer-Lang, Michel Dorais et Pierre Dutey, qui dirigent l'ouvrage, l'homophobie ne se limite donc pas à la haine, la violence et la discrimination à l'endroit des gais et lesbiennes. Elle est « la discrimination envers les personnes qui montrent, ou à qui l'on prête, certaines qualités (ou défauts) attribués à l'autre genre ».

Deux essais parmi les huit contenus dans le livre sont particulièrement intéressants. D'abord celui de Daniel Wel-

er-Lang, anthropologue et professeur à l'Université de Lyon, intitulé « L'homophobie: la face cachée du masculin », qui reprend et élabore la thèse principale de l'ouvrage. Puis « La recherche des causes de l'homosexualité: une science fiction? », signé par Michel Dorais, chercheur et formateur dans le domaine de la sexologie et de l'intervention sociale, et aussi consultant pour le Centre québécois de coordination sur le sida.

L'article de Michel Dorais propose un examen critique des théories constructivistes (l'homosexualité est un produit sociohistorique) et essentialistes (l'homosexualité est innée, scientifiquement explicable - et traitable?). L'auteur condamne vertement l'hypothèse physiologique émise il y a quelques années par des chercheurs américains et fortement médiatisée. Il la compare avec « les théories des aliénistes du siècle dernier, qui affirmaient que les « marginaux » avaient des cerveaux différents de ceux des honnêtes gens ».

L'auteur reproche aux tenants des approches essentialistes de rechercher une cause unique à l'homosexualité, ce qu'il considère simpliste et dangereusement réductionniste. Il privilégie plutôt les approches constructivistes, qui ont selon lui le mérite de ne pas demander « Pourquoi l'homosexualité? » mais bien « Pourquoi l'homophobie? ». Enfin, Michel Dorais reproche aux chercheurs et aux chercheuses, qui orientent la plupart du temps leurs recherches de façon à confirmer (mais jamais à infirmer) leurs préjugés, de manquer de neutralité et de faire preuve de malhonnêteté scientifique.

Six autres articles, tous intéressants sans nécessairement avancer de nouvelles idées, complètent le mélange. À noter est celui de Claudie Lesselier sur les rapports ambigus entretenus par les groupes gais et l'extrême-droite. Elle y souligne la dimension homoérotique du fascisme et le culte esthétique

"The babaylan were women healers, priestesses, counselors, decision makers, and held important positions in society during pre-colonial times in the Philippines."

— Melanie Liwanag of Babaylan

women's groups in the Philippines organized the first protest against the Marcos dictatorship and martial law. From then on, October 28 has been declared Philippine Women's Day of Protest.

In celebration of the day and also as an anniversary event for their first year, the group decided to organize an all-women's protest at Sistah's Café in Toronto. There were performances and speeches by members of Babaylan and other groups (such as Gabay, an organization of domestic workers, and Pandaysining, a cultural collective of the Philippine solidarity group in Toronto) and people (including Georgia Velasco, a Filipino indigenous woman from the Kankanaey nation, Christy Nogolos, a migrant worker, and Maria Elisa Esguerra, the ex-

VAINCRE LA PEUR DE L'AUTRE EN SOI

pour le corps masculin qui y est rattaché, qui pourraient expliquer l'« érotisation du fascisme » par les homosexuels, notamment par ceux qui se prêtent à des comportements sado-masochistes.

On regrette cependant que seulement un des textes s'intéresse directement à l'homosexualité féminine... pour en expliquer et en dénoncer l'invisibilité et l'« invisibilisation », qui est la forme la plus répandue d'homophobie à l'endroit des lesbiennes. Les lesbiennes, y lit-on, sont victimes à la fois du sexisme et de l'homophobie, puisque leur sexualité, adolescente et incomplète (sans pénétration) est niée. Elles dérangent aussi, tant les femmes que les hommes, parce qu'elles sont la preuve que les femmes peuvent être autonomes.

On peut également être surpris par le tableau des relations hommes/femmes qui ressort du livre. On le reforme avec l'impression que les hommes sont presque tous machos et que les femmes sont encore à la recherche d'hommes bien virils, capables de les protéger et de subvenir à leurs besoins tant affectifs, sexuels que financiers. On semble occulter ou ne mentionner que timidement les changements tout de même appréciables survenus chez la génération des 15-30 ans. Il est vrai que la plupart des recherches et des enquêtes ont été réalisées en France, où la situation est sensiblement différente de celle que l'on connaît au Québec, ce qui pourrait expliquer le ton général.

En dépit de ces réserves, *La peur de l'autre en soi* apparaît comme un ouvrage incontournable pour ceux et celles qui s'intéressent aux questions d'homosexualité et d'homophobie, et plus généralement aux rapports entre les sexes. Non seulement il apporte de nouveaux éléments de réflexion et il ouvre de nouvelles pistes de

recherche, mais encore il a le mérite de le faire en langue française. Alors, sans avoir à le faire par charité chauviniste, on devrait le lire (et surtout l'offrir en cadeau pour Noël), et montrer aux maisons d'édition québécoises et françaises qu'il existe un intérêt pour le sujet et qu'elles peuvent, sans courir de risques, publier, publier, publier.

La peur de l'autre en soi; du sexisme à l'homophobie, sous la direction de Daniel Welzer-Lang, Pierre Dutey et Michel Dorais, VLB éditeur, 1994, « Des hommes en changement », 302 p. 24,95\$ à la librairie l'Androgyne, 3636 bd St-Laurent.



Demystifying the "fag hag" ONE FAG HAG'S VIEW

by juliana hodgson

Maybe you have never heard of a fag hag. Maybe you are one and don't know it yet. Maybe you have met one but didn't recognize her as a fruit fly. As for myself, I have been a hag for about two years, ever since my friend came out to me. Now I hear some people are giving fag hags a bad name. As a fag hag, I find this upsetting. I hope that by clarifying my role as a "hag", people will better understand and have a little more tolerance for what a fag hag is and what I do.

Essentially, I am the friend of gay men. I started out with only one gay friend, but now I have many more. We like to do the same things: we shop, we see movies, we sing Broadway songs and we bitch about our boyfriends.

Particularly, we go to gay clubs to socialize. At the club, my gay friend and I are a tag team unit. Sometimes we are partners in fashion crime. We set themes upon occasion and coordinate our attire accord-

ingly. For example, we have a Brady Bunch night: he dresses up as Greg and I go as Jan. Mainly, I am his dancing partner and advisor. I offer opinions on the guys he finds interesting. Most often, I provide an information service to other guys interested in my friend. I supply the vital statistics (e.g. whether or not he is single). Boys can often test the water with the fag hag before they try chatting up her friend.

People often ask me why I, as a feminist, do not mind being called a "hag". Although "hag" conjures up nasty images of Macbeth-type witches with warts sprouting from their noses, it does not bother me. If it were used maliciously, I would have a problem with it. To me, "fag hag" is just a buzz word for "friend", a silly word, like "fruit fly", for summing up a complex relationship.

A lot of people have asked me why I, as a straight woman, enjoy going to gay clubs. Some have speculated that I feel less threatened by gay men. This is not true. I love my friend and I go to gay clubs to spend time with him in

an atmosphere in which he feels most comfortable.

On the same note, gay clubs have their ups and downs for the "hag". On the positive side, I've met a lot of really great people. It is also full of surprises, like when I was presented with a pink balloon in the middle of the dance floor by a gentleman who curtsied for me and then disappeared into the crowd.

Something that bothers me though, is that a few guys — and I do mean a few — at the clubs make it pretty uncomfortable for "hags". I have heard a couple of snide remarks about why I would be at such a place. I can never forget one such incident. Three of us walked through the door only to hear some guy announce "Oh look, it's the cast of 90210". Believe me it wasn't meant as a compliment.

I would just like to say, "Please give us a break!" I go to clubs because a friend, with as much right to be there as you, wants me to be. So why be nasty? Like anyone else, I go to clubs to have a good time, no more and no less.



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"LGB TIMELINE" FROM PAGE 10

the Parti Québécois adds "sexual orientation" to the Charter.

1980s

1988 — The Lesbian and Gay Community Centre forms in Montréal. It provides services ranging from dances to a research library to counselling for the Montréal community.

1989 — At the International AIDS conference in Montréal, ACT-UP Montréal forms to educate and sensitize the public towards AIDS. Queer Nation in Montréal also forms to concentrate on AIDS in the LGB community specifically.

1990s

July 1990 — Montréal Police raid a party at "Le Sex Garage". The LGB community protests against the police brutality. Police arrest 56 at this protest and the movement is newly mobilised. "Lesbians and Gays Against Violence" forms.

1990 — La Coalition des Minorités Sexuelles (CMS) forms as an umbrella group for Montréal's LGB community.

1993 — The CMS is replaced by La Table de la Consultation des Gaies du Grand Montréal. This group has 60 other groups in its coalition. The organisation's three committees (violence, political action and Health and Social services), continue to handle a variety of issues. The Violence committee has been part of an ongoing campaign to improve police and media relations.

Nov: 1993 — The Québec government holds a series of public consultations for the Commission de la Droits des Personnes du Québec. This is the first time that any government in the world conducts public hearings about the rights of the queer community.

A paper from the trans-gender community is ignored on the grounds that transsexuality is too controversial. La Table de la consultation is involved and a report entitled "L'illégalité à l'Égalité" is published. This report is not yet implemented.

Oct 1994 — La Table de consultation holds a press conference concerning the remarks by Roseanne Skoke, but no journalists attend. Roger Leclaire of La Table de la Consultation is working to take either the Liberal Government or Roseanne Skokes to trial.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

ACT UP MONTRÉAL

Activist group laying low

QUIETER NOW

by jessica low

ACT UP Montréal is no longer the "bad boy in the streets," but, as Douglas Buckley-Couvrette, administrator of the organization said, "they'll be there when they're needed."

Since its formation in 1989, ACT UP Montréal has been trying to get locals to care about AIDS. While most were sitting on the sidelines watching the disease take its toll, ACT UP was screaming in the streets about the urgency of the crisis.

The group has had a reputation for being aggressive and outspoken because, in the past, it has been. The group is also renowned throughout Montréal for being able to get things done. ACT UP has been so successful in motivating the community to take action that its former role in Montréal is now being fulfilled by 17 other community groups concerned with HIV and AIDS.

Has ACT UP slipped away from the forefront of AIDS activism in Montréal? "I never hear about ACT UP anymore," commented an LGBM member and one-time ACT UP participant. "They just don't seem to have the presence that they did a few years ago."

Buckley-Couvrette explained, "ACT UP has evolved from being an actual body to a philosophy."

Over the past five years, ACT UP has been staging demonstrations and using the media to further their goal of putting a stop to the AIDS crisis. Montréal listened when ACT UP members stormed the international conference on AIDS in 1989 and stopped the Archbishop of Montréal from speaking. The group felt that he had no place speaking about AIDS, given the Catholic Church's position on the epidemic and on homosexuality.

The city paid attention

on Prisoner's Justice Day, when ACT UP staged a demonstration to demand that condoms, needles and bleach be made available in prisons. Prisoners now have access to condoms, but bleach and syringes, essential for protecting intra-venous drug users from HIV, are hard to come by.

Government has taken notice of ACT UP. Four years ago, the federal government launched "Malades sur

sented Justice Minister Allan Rock with a report on access to medication for those living with HIV and AIDS, and has talked to him about hate-crimes legislation and amendments to legislation regarding sexual orientation.

Using the media

A large part of ACT UP's success can be attributed to media attention, which has helped to get people talking, and doing something about

things done is to be visible and vocal. Groups like CPAVIH, Séro-Zéro and the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre have taken over some of the organization's former activities.

That is not to say that ACT UP's presence is no longer needed. "It's like the 'bat-phone' rings when worst comes to worst. People know that if they can't handle a situation, then ACT UP can," said Buckley-Couvrette.

member, and its participants do not regard themselves as an incorporated body. When this philosophy is called to action, a group of "non-aligned, non-partisan" individuals materialize to bring AIDS issues to Montréal's attention.

Some would like to see ACT UP's membership increase. As ACT UP has no membership list and asks no questions of its participants, it is difficult to estimate how many people are involved.

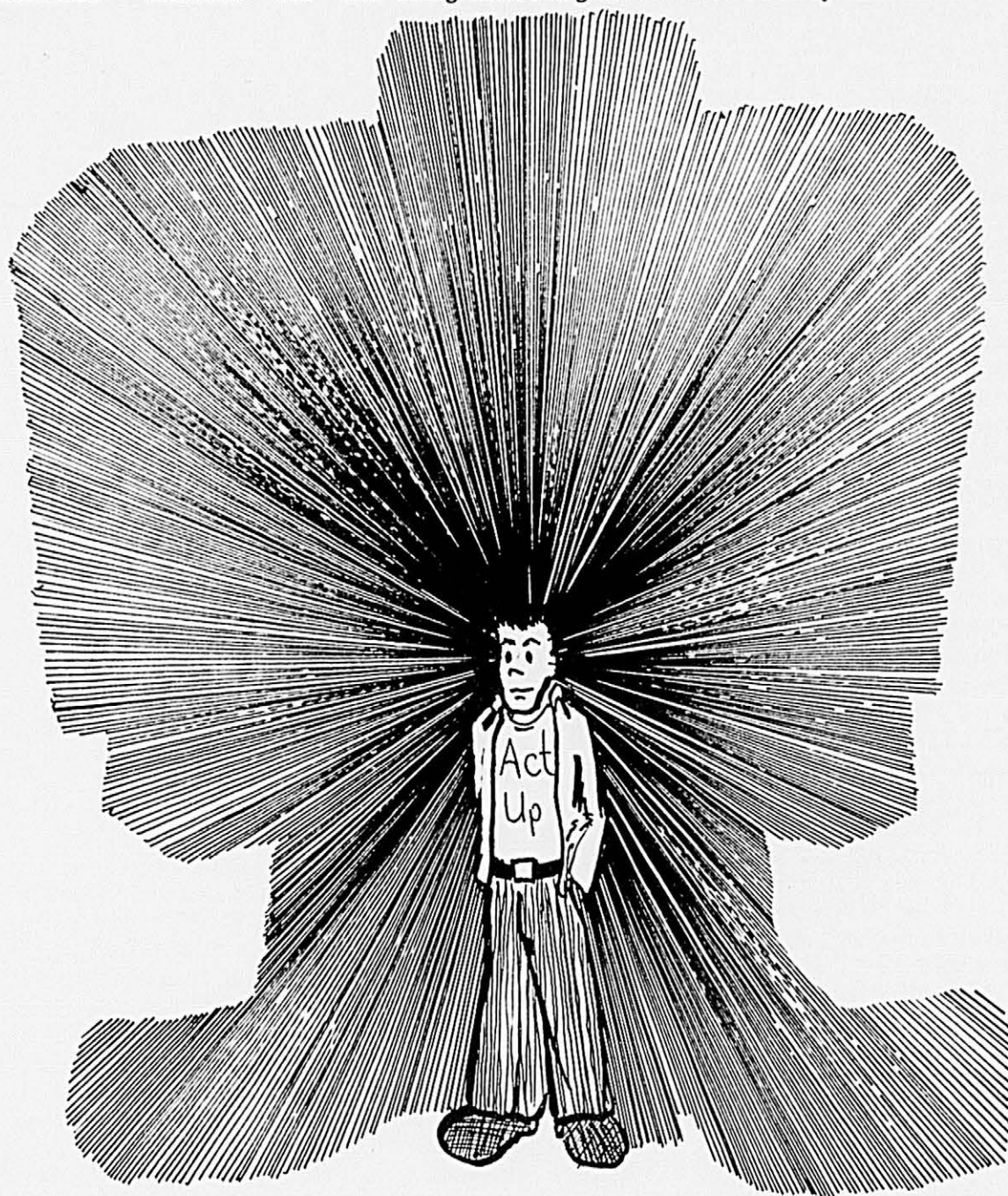
"You just are or you aren't [a member]. By attending only one rally you can consider yourself an ACT UPper," explained Buckley-Couvrette.

ACT UP participants in the past have predominantly been gay men. According to Buckley-Couvrette, it is the gay community that continues to be most adversely affected by the epidemic. Motivated by the passing of many close friends, their shouts have been angrier and louder than those of most people in the straight community.

Although co-ordinators never ask about people's sexual orientation, they have noticed that ACT UP is becoming increasingly diversified. The influx of female participants, for instance, could well be due to the fact that Montréal women have a higher rate of HIV infection than do women in any other urban Canadian centre.

Buckley-Couvrette responded to criticisms of ACT UP's new course by noting that the group's presence had to be modified to meet its ostensible purpose.

He said ACT UP is more than a threatening material presence in the streets, but rather, an overriding philosophy of action. It is now this philosophy that is the driving force behind so many valuable community groups committed to helping people living with AIDS.



GRAPHIC BY MAX FRANCISCO

Pieds", a program designed to facilitate patients' access to medication.

Although it was abolished due to a lack of funds, ACT UP has not given up. Buckley-Couvrette recently pre-

AIDS.

As such, ACT UP has helped to shape the way community groups concerned with the disease function. Groups have learned from ACT UP that the way to get

There are no specific ACT UP events planned for the future, but members are on call, ready and willing to act up as soon as there is a demand.

The group's philosophy is such that anyone can act as a

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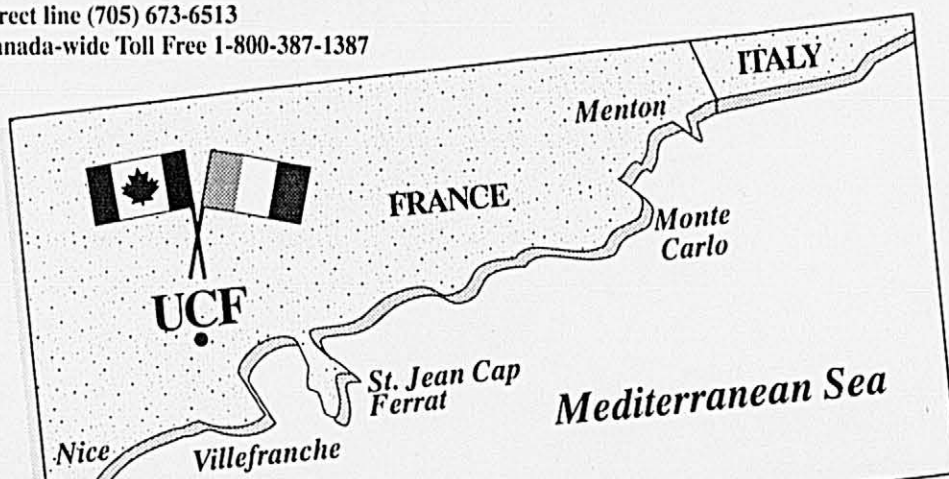
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INFORMATION SESSIONS

Information booth, Leacock Lobby
McGill University
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November 2 and 3, 1994
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

AND

Arts Council Room, Arts Building
McGill University
853 Sherbrooke St. West
Montreal, Québec
November 2, 1994
7 to 8 p.m.

India Progressive Study Group, Black Students' Network, McGill Renewal Club, Shakti Women of Color Collective, The McGill Daily

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TWO DISCUSSIONS

1. UNSETTLING CULTURE: DISRUPTING NORMS, RETHINKING DEFINITIONS featuring:

Rana Bose (founding member of Serai Theatre Company and Contributor Editor of *Serai Quarterly*)

Eric Hoffman (Historian of Science, Lecturer at Concordia University)

Sandra Smith (Editor of *Today Tomorrow*)

Tuesday Nov. 1 7pm, Thomson House 3650 McTavish

2. MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADIAN EDUCATION: DEGHET TOIZING THE EDUCATIONAL CANON

Speakers to be announced

Thursday Nov. 3 4:30pm Leacock 232

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I. Daugherty, Boston U. rep.

Friday Nov. 4

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Montréal's Yakdav continues to be GAY, JEWISH AND PROUD

by tamar milstein

"Many people think that I do not exist," noted Karen Polansky, president of Yakdav, an organization for Jewish gays, lesbians and bisexuals in Montréal. She assured us all that she's "here, and here to stay."

Yakdav has fought for affiliation with the Montréal Jewish Community Centres. But its existence is a significant move away from the traditional doctrine of Judaism, which forbids homosexuality.

"For the most part, we've been well accepted. We've worked very hard to let ourselves be known," said Polansky. "We've been welcome in many situations, but it hasn't gone without a lot of work."

Because of the group's positive and abundant exposure in events such as Super Sunday, a Jewish community fundraiser, and Ça Marche, the walk for AIDS on Oct. 2, "people know us as ordinary Jewish people that care about our community," said the president.

"I personally believe that by not being invisible... by letting people in my workplace and elsewhere know who I am, it gives them an opportunity to see that I am normal," Polansky added. She called the press' image of homosexuals—portrayed by leather, whips and "gay pride"—an educational process, noting, "They [the media] sensationalize our lives."

There are roughly 175 members of Yakdav, aged 19 to 70 years old, who represent all branches of Judaism. Yakdav sponsor's various social events, monthly Friday night dinners, services, and other activities. Other services that the organization offers is a unique program for the parents of gays, lesbians and bisexuals "to help these parents come to terms with their sons and daughters," said Polansky.

Choosing comfortable circles

Rebecca, a Jewish Studies student at McGill and a Reconstructionist Jew, said she is proud of being both Jewish and lesbian. A member of Yakdav, LBGM, Hillel's Jewish Women's Circle and McGill's Women's Union, she said, "Being Jewish and being lesbian are very integral parts of my identity and I couldn't choose one over the other."

By becoming involved in groups such as Yakdav, she said, she was able to integrate the two aspects of her identity without being forced to choose between them. In addition, her open and supportive synagogue, Dorshei Emet, has never made her feel uncomfortable with her homosexuality.

Generally, Rebecca said that she feels accepted in Jewish contexts. "I choose my circles, so I make myself comfortable," she explained.

Polansky expressed a little less comfort with the general Jewish community, noting, "For me, going to a regular synagogue is possible, but not comfortable because I can't be all of who I am, which is why I enjoy [Yakdav's] Friday night onegs." There, she added, she "can be lesbian and Jewish and celebrate all of who I am."

Ian, a political science student at McGill, and a member of LBGM, said that his own "discomfort came from within. I felt that I couldn't come out to [members of the Jewish community]."

Rebecca expressed agreement with this assessment. "[The] Jewish community places a great amount of stress on the issues of family."

She continued by noting that this focus can become uncomfortable for lesbians at Jewish functions when everyone is concerned about boyfriends, marriages, and raising children traditionally.

Ian agreed with Rebecca, adding, "The greatest issue for me [as a gay Jew] has been the whole Jewish community, which tends to be more close-knit than the anglo community."

Ian is still in the process of coming out as well as determining his place in the Jewish community. "The coming out process is a much bigger decision when one is involved in the Jewish community," he explained. Even

so, he noted that the experiences of his Jewish and gentile homosexual friends have been quite similar.

As for his peers, Ian observed that "the whole coming out experience led me to a new group of friends." He has, however, been moving back more towards Jewish people since he has become more comfortable with his homosexuality and it has become less of an issue for him.

"Coming out on two fronts"

Rebecca was more acutely aware of distinctions between herself and gentile lesbians. She said her coming out was "a coming out on two fronts."

Not only did she have to confront her friends, family and Jewish community with her lesbian identity, but she also had to be truthful about her Judaism to the lesbian com-

"Being Jewish and being lesbian
are very integral parts of my
identity and I couldn't choose one
over the other."

munity, where, she said, she found a certain amount of anti-Semitism. She has noticed some insensitivity, such as meetings scheduled on Yom Kippur and the general attitude that Judaism is more patriarchal than any other religion.

"Being Jewish and lesbian can be something very empowering," Rebecca commented. As a participant in the Jewish Women's Leadership Conference in Ottawa, Rebecca found the need for Jewish lesbian role models and cited Evelyn Tortonbeck, the editor of a classic Jewish lesbian anthology called *Nice Jewish Girls*, as a dynamic leader.

"There are Jewish lesbians doing amazing things out there," she added.

Currently Rebecca is working with a woman at Concordia to form a female students' group, which will be named after Tortonbeck's anthology, for Jewish lesbians and bisexuals. The focus of the group, whether it be social, activist, or otherwise, will be determined depending on members' interests.

The Nice Jewish Girls' first meeting will be Wednesday, 18h30, at the Concordia Women's Centre, 2020 Mackay. For more information, call 848-7431.

